STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Hive Systems
www.hive-systems.com
A project by Logan Ray

November 25, 2002-January 19, 2003*

Please join us for a closing reception for Hive Systems with
designer Logan Ray:

Friday, January 10, 6-8 PM
Storefront for Art and Architecture
97 Kenmare Street

What began as an investigation of real and virtual spaces,
eventually manifested itself as Hive Systems, a mutually interactive
web site and physical installation. The installation is powered by a
central server, or brain, located in the gallery, which serves as
the main generator, processor, and distributor of information. The
server receives input both directly from
numerous sensors, cameras & triggers in the physical space, and also
via user input over the Internet. In some cases the installation
responds directly to this input, reacting via movement, light, or
sound for the physical space, or
by a direct response on the web site. The experiences of the
physical and virtual users are flexible and interdependent.
Ultimately, interaction with the Hive Systems installation is both
behavioral (through programmed response patterns), and democratic
(through multiple user input).

Because of the interactive nature of the installation, interaction
between the physical site and the web interface are limited to
gallery hours.

Gallery hours: Wednesday-Sunday, 11-6 PM

Storefront for Art and Architecture
97 Kenmare Street
New York, NY 10012

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* Please note, Hive Systems has been extended until Sunday, January
19, 2003.

Hive Systems 2.0
Storefront for Art & Architecture
Project Description
October 27, 2002

For the highly developed situation is, by definition, low in opportunities of participation, and rigorous in its demands of specialist fragmentation from those who would control it.

-Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media, p. 29.

Life in the western world is a highly developed situation. It is increasingly hi-tech, high tempo, high expectations for those who function within it. We have access today to an unprecedented amount of information, and this information is influencing, if not totally pre-determining, the way we live our lives. Databases, auto-responders, behavior profiling, and unsolicited recommendations are just a few of the systems changing the way we think and interact with information and technology, and in turn how we live. This installation is an experimental attempt to put some of these info-mechanisms, already ubiquitous in other arenas, into the largely static field of built architecture.

The installation is powered by a central server, or brain, which serves as the main generator, processor, and distributor of information. The server receives input both directly from numerous sensors, cameras & triggers in the physical space, and also via user input over the Internet. In some cases the installation responds directly to this input, reacting via movement, light, or sound for the physical space, or by a direct response on the web site. In other cases web and/or physical events are conditional upon others, or occur automatically when a certain set of conditions is met. The experiences of the physical and virtual users are flexible and interdependent. The web pages generated by the server/brain are dynamic, allowing the options presented to the web user to be dependent on the conditions of the physical space. In the same way, the physical environment encountered by the visitor to the Storefront, and the options available to him/her can be controlled via interaction with the website.

The end effect is that interaction with the Hive Systems 2 installation is both behavioral (programmed response patterns), and democratic (multiple user input). Sometimes you know exactly what response you will get, just as when you push a certain button on a person. At another time the same stimulus may produce a completely different reaction, because of other variables you may or may not be aware of. Hive Systems 2 is programmed to behave in the same way, both in the physical space and for the web-user.

The nervous system for Hive Systems 2 is a combination of existing infrastructure and networked, off-the-shelf, inexpensive components. A majority of the equipment is taken from the world of home automation, which is still for the most part the obscure weekend hobby of suburban computer programmers and control-obsessed gadgeteers. A good deal of the energy spent on this project has been in finding methods of taking these objects designed for creating systems which are highly controlled, rigid, secure, and private, and co-opting them into something that is intentionally autonomous, flexible, unprotected, and public. Once the system is running, there is not one all-knowing, all-powerful system administrator, but instead a field of equal participants.

The outcome and atmosphere of the hive systems 2 installation is not pre-determined, and depends greatly on those who interact with it, whether intentionally through a visit or on the internet, or unknowingly, simply by walking nearby. The quote at the beginning of this description has been an inspiring provocation. Unlike McLuhan, I believe that there *is* the possibility of high-definition, high participation spaces, and that they have a tremendous social potential that is only now beginning to be explored.

Like any other medium, the development of an interactive space can be as exciting or as horrifying as the message it is chosen to express. Interacting with technology is receding every day as something "other" and becoming more and more one of our core skills for living. At the same time the way technology is expressed is becoming less noticeable and more human. These trends will inevitably extend to incorporate architecture, so I believe architects should pre-emptively begin to engage these trends.